

THE CATHOLIC ART QUARTERLY



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ART & NATURE

God willed that man should be a creature that could defy him and therefore he endowed him with intelligence and will. Man could obviously not defy his Creator unless he knew what he was doing and could will freely to do it. So man must necessarily be a scientist and a maker of choices. Unless he can exercise intelligence and prudence, he is simply not human.

But he is not of necessity an artist. God might conceivably have willed that his intelligence and will were not necessary for his dealing with his environment. If the virtue of art had not been given to man, he would have been able to fulfill his various needs — clothes, boats, songs, machines — but he would not have needed to *design* them. Like the bees and birds and beasts, he would have had the forms of all these necessary things revealed to him interiorly. God would have infused a knowledge of exemplary forms into his mind, just as he does with the lower animals. To make a house, a man would go out and gather materials, just as he does now, but he would have known instinctively and in advance just what he was to do with them. The swallows collect their mud, and they cleverly *adapt* the exemplar in their minds to the accidental conditions, but they do not have to *supply* the artistic idea itself.

However, God did not, in fact, do this. He gave us responsibility here as well as in the field of morals, *facere* as well as *agere*, and made us artists. He “risked,” so to speak, all the horrible things that we

have indeed made, in order to honor us with the status of little creators. He endowed us not only with some of his intellectual divinity and his willing divinity, but with some of his creative divinity. He left to man the job of working out his relationship to his environment all by himself. He gave him no tools save his own hands and he gave him no technical knowledge. He did man a very great honor in raising him above the animals in the sphere of making also. So, we say that mankind has three activities: knowing, doing and making. But he might have had but two of these and still have been human.

So we can see art as a special divine gift, an extension of natural creation, and we can see something of the relationship between nature and art.

And we can, let us hope, purge our minds once and forever of the ridiculous notion that art is merely for the purpose of making pretty things. This has already been done for us on an infinite scale by the Creator of nature. No object of art, however perfect, can ever be as beautiful as an object of nature right from the hand of God. To be able to see all this beauty, however, we have to learn to give up our little prejudices and cultivate knowledge of what things are. We have to will to use our intelligences.

And in our arts, we can learn to see that only by the use of our intelligence and will can we hope to make things even reasonably perfectly.

SYMPOSIUM

SHOULD WORKS OF ART BE SELF-EXPLANATORY?

Question: *How can the following opinions be reconciled? The Student Section (C.A.Q., Michaelmas, 1952) tells us: "A picture that needs to be explained is not necessarily a poor picture. Christ explained his parables; the writings of the Fathers were explained by the doctors of the Church in their homilies; poetry, while beautiful in rhythm and choice of words, becomes more valuable and pleasurable when the depth of meaning hidden in the words is revealed to us." On the other hand, the Holy Father says that works of art which need an explanation "cease to be true art." In his address to artists (C.A.Q., Easter, 1951) he says: "Today . . . only too frequently in certain schools, the work of art does not suffice, of itself, to express the thought, reveal the sentiment and disclose the soul of the author. Since it needs to be explained in verbal language, it loses its value as a sign."*

S. L.

I

The artist seeks to interpret and to express his universe and thereby provide an extension of the work of the Creator. The very uniqueness of the work of art, though autonomous, demands interpretation by the beholder. The intelligibility of the work depends on whether or not the beholder possesses the artist's vocabulary. For instance, the poetry of Pound and T. S. Eliot contain words and idioms which are not now common to our traditional vocabulary. In the visual arts, as well as in the auditory arts, our interpretations depend largely upon tradition because we inherit our vocabularies from the preceeding age. Therefore new idioms which evolve, demand that a new "vocabulary" be learned. Those who seek to understand modern art by using the vocabulary (plastic images) of the Renaissance are bound to end in utter frustration. In the light of these observations, "a picture that needs to be explained is not necessarily a poor picture" is a valid statement to the extent that it admits to the fact that the student does not recognize the plastic elements existing in the work of art.

No visual art can be translated into

verbal terms since it is a visual communication. If words are necessary, the work has failed in its maximum visual expressiveness.

Because of our "open" society which no longer has a single unifying faith, we in the western world no longer have universal symbols understood by all—except the stop and go light, the directional arrow, the dollar sign, the mushroom shape! The contemporary artist, while possessing superb techniques and skills cannot express himself in universal symbols, hence he turns to the only course open to him: the invention of very private symbols which are personal to him alone. Obviously, the Holy Father is right in exclaiming that these are no longer a "sign." Any symbolism used in art for religious purposes cannot be obscure or it loses its value as a religious symbol.

Clare Fontanini

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2

The Holy Father's statement is simple enough on the surface. But it may be necessary to enlarge upon it and differentiate

between two possible understandings of "explained."

A laying bare of the aesthetic side of a work of art may be quite interesting but cannot pretend to replace the direct apprehension of it. Take for example the liturgy of the Mass, which is a noble work of art. One might be able to explain all of its beautiful parts and their artistic relation to each other, but that is not the same thing as being present at the Mass, acting in it, and being simply carried away by its beauty.

If you cannot feel the beauty of the Chant, or be touched by the Psalms or moved by the Offertory, well, — no amount of explaining why these are beautiful, or what makes them so, will help you. The same thing is as true of painting as of poetry. Man perceives a thing's beauty directly and intuitively. He may discuss a verse of a poem and dissect its beauty till he is blue in the face, but that is not the same thing as taking it to his heart and simply "seeing" it beautiful. In fact, the elaborate discussion is futile, if not sometimes hurtful, to this simple perception.

On the other hand, there is a sort of explanation which, I think, can help indirectly one's apprehension of a work of art. Sister Augusta's words in the "Student Section" article seemed to me particularly apt in describing it as a *revelation*, not of the aesthetic effect, but of "the depth of meaning hidden in the work."

Truly fine works of art have more depth of meaning than is at first apparent to the average person. (Again take the liturgy of the Mass as an example.) Every one has experienced how, as he became more deeply aware of life itself, he was able to perceive more profound meanings in the same works of art he had known as a child. In fact, it even happens that, through some event in his life, or the learning of a new language or horizon, or the unfolding of meaning in someone's display or explanation, he suddenly discovers meaning for himself in things

which formerly held none for him. Then he adopts these things as his own. Then also, he is touched by their beauty as he never was before.

In this sense, I should say that many works of art — and especially the deeper and finer ones — can become both "more valuable and pleasurable" in proportion as one's mind and heart are opened by revelations of their meanings, because, after all, their meanings are those of life itself. But as far as seeing the beauty of these works and being moved by it, that is outside the scope of explanation; it is a direct and personal experience.

Any work which has no immediate appeal of any sort to human intuition, i.e., which always needs to be explained in order to function at all, can hardly be described as truly artistic and of any direct service to its users.

A fine work of art, on the other hand, functions by impressing you as a sign, i.e., touching and moving you simply without need of explanation. But this direct effect is not experienced unless you also penetrate the work with equally fine insight. The only valid explanations, therefore, are those which help you yourself as a sensitive human being, not those which pretend to look, listen and "appreciate" for you.

Adé de Béthune
Newport, R. I.

3

The difficulty of reconciling the two opinions cited by S. L. is needlessly increased by the fact that Pope Pius XII has been misquoted. In his address of September 5, 1950, to the First International Congress of Catholic Artists, from which the statement of his opinion is drawn, he did not say that 'works of art which need explanation "cease to be true art"'; he said that any art that lacks expressive value ceases to be true art.¹ The two are not at all the same. What the Holy Father is reported

by S. L. to have said would indeed be in contradiction with the opinion cited from the Student Section of the *C.A.Q.* for Michaelmas, 1952; what he actually did say is not. Nevertheless, the words of the Pope, especially when taken in conjunction with the correctly quoted ones that follow, do offer some difficulty in reconciling his opinion about explanation in regard to a work of art with the other opinion reported. To my mind, the issue turns around the precise sense in which each one of the two uses the expression "needs to be explained." I take it, moreover, that discussion in the present symposium should bear on this point of the "explanation" of a work of art.

The human intellect is of its very nature *expressive*. The mental word alone is proof of its spiritual abundance, but by a natural superabundance it tends of itself to overflow and to give outward expres-

¹"Une première condition s'impose pour que l'art puisse produire un si désirable résultat: à savoir sa valeur expressive, faute de laquelle il cesse d'être un art véritable" (from the original French text of the address in *Osservatore Romano*, September 6, 1950). What the Holy Father has said here is: "A first condition is required for art to be able to produce so desirable a result: namely, its expressive value, lacking which it ceases to be a true art." The translation of this passage which appeared in *C.A.Q.*, Easter 1951 (N.C.W.C. News Service) has erred in rendering *à savoir* by "to appreciate"; it reads: "The first condition required that art may be able to produce such a desirable result is to appreciate its expressive value. . . ." This seemingly slight slip may be at the bottom of some of the present confusion. Certainly it has unexpectedly important consequences in so far as it thus makes "the first condition" to consist in a subjective appreciation on the part of the beholder, whereas the Holy Father's statement says simply that art must have expressive value. Moreover, that Pope Pius XII has primarily in mind the objective work of art, seems abundantly clear from the following sentence in which he goes on to say: "In some circles, the *work of art* does not of itself suffice to render the thought, express the feelings and lay bare the soul of the artist."

sion or manifestation to its concepts and ideas. Art is the virtue of the practical intellect whereby the latter expresses itself in a work or a thing-to-be-made. A work of art is nothing but the expression or embodiment in a material substance of a spiritual idea. When, therefore, Pope Pius XII states that, where expressive value is lacking, there is no true art, he is simply recalling one of the fundamental principles of the very nature of art. The work of art stands as the external sign of an internal idea. Its value as sign, and as work of art, will depend upon the degree to which it makes manifest this idea; in the degree that it does not do this, it loses its value as sign and is either no true sign at all or is, at best, an inadequate sign. Hence, if a work of art is so deficient that it needs numerically the addition of verbal explanation extrinsic to itself before the artist's idea can be conveyed, it does indeed, as the Holy Father points out, lose its value as a sign and it is a poor work of art; it scarcely deserves the name of work of art at all. This is the sense, it seems to me, in which the Holy Father's references to "need of explanation" are to be interpreted.

There may, however, be "need of explanation" of another sort which implies no inadequacy in the work of art as such. I refer to the explanation that is required to supply for a deficiency in the observer and is necessary if he is to be rendered capable of recognizing and appreciating the already existing fact that a certain work of art does adequately express a certain artistic idea and is not lacking in value as a sign thereof. The defect, in this case, is not in the work of art but in the observer; there is "need of explanation" only to remedy his inadequacy. The most obvious example of this is the case of children whose latent powers need to be awakened and insights deepened. But there are many others who, through lack of intelligence or of knowledge or of experience or of application, fail to perceive

what is already present in a work of art. One must not say that human speech is meaningless merely because one is, for one reason or another, ignorant of the language in which it is expressed. Art, too, has its language. If I have rightly understood, it is in this second sense that the author of the other opinion speaks of that "need of explanation" which does not necessarily indicate a poor picture. The amount of such explanation required, if any, will vary considerably; there are probably few, however, whom a hint from the artist or from an expert would not help better to perceive all that is in a picture and hence to recognize its true value as a sign of the artist's idea.

The case of sacred or liturgical art is a special one which need not be treated here, since the two opinions cited by S. L. are concerned only with art in general. The prescriptions of lawful authorities and the exigencies of the destination of sacred art place special obligations on its artists. *Mediator Dei's* warning against *exaggerated* symbolism would seem to indicate that, in sacred art, the sign ought to be simpler and more universally intelligible. But this is another matter!

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4

I think the antinomy between the diverse opinions is not so great as might appear at first view.

The whole world of human knowledge is characterized by a movement from simplicity to complexity. The same thing is true of the world of art. The artist first *knows* and then *signifies* through his medium. The act of *signification* is complex and involved precisely because the artifact is the sign of an *idea* which was first beheld in a kind of untranslatable intuitive

state, sheer, lovely and simple, in its intellectual home.

The only means proper to man for conveying ideas is that of *signs*, words mostly, but also by gestures, rhythms, artifacts and the like. Every artist, as artist, moves unmolested in the realm of human creativeness. "Art permits no foreign elements to jostle it," is the way Mr. Maritain puts this. However, the *idea* which the creative artist is trying to capture in stone, on canvas or in some other medium can never be totally divorced from the world of sense. However "abstract" we may think our thinking is, it is undeniable that even the most abstract thought tends to be linked with concrete imagery. Before he starts, the artist is limited, perhaps he is even "jostled" a little by the fact that he must obey the human law of signification. Then, too, he is limited by his paints, stone, wood, canvas, scalpel. If, however, he is a Christian artist, he is further limited by the purpose which the artifact is to serve. Even so, it is within this limitation that the greatest freedom and the most sublime creative and artistic heights have been and will continue to be achieved. Certainly the position expressed by the Holy Father is understandable if we compare the text under consideration with another text from the *Mediator Dei* in which he writes: "Modern art should be given free scope in the due and reverent service of the Church and the sacred rites, provided that it preserves a correct balance between styles, tending neither to extreme realism nor to excessive symbolism, and that the *needs of the Christian community* are taken into consideration rather than the particular taste or talent of the individual artist."

Of course, art as art is not pedagogical. But it is silly to pretend that the artist is not trying to convey something to a potential viewer. And the viewer sees *something*. What he sees is certainly conditioned by his powers of perception, his training, cultural background and many other factors. Nevertheless, the *objet d'art*

is something viewed in one swift glance which yields only an imperfect and incomplete understanding of the total work. Many people dismiss the work at once. Others look again, study it, and it is at this point that the business of "explanation" enters the discussion. It is absolutely necessary to know something about the quality of line, shape, texture, color, form, structural elements, in short to know about matters which pertain to "right making" which is indispensable to all art. An insight into these matters helps the beholder catch nuances of the central and inspiring idea which the uninstructed simply do not grasp.

Again: the "explanation" may direct the mind of the viewer to types of data to which he is not accustomed to refer: historical matters, cultural and anthropological facts, scriptural texts and the like. These things give increased significance to that initial and imperfect first view. Yet, every "explanation" must be related to a first indispensable vision of the thing-as-a-whole, upon which it builds, thus completing it, perfecting it, but obviously never displacing it.

In a way, every work of art is a proper object for contemplation. And no one starts at the summit. He must receive instruction in this delicate task, learning to develop deeper insights and to unearth richer meanings which all too often escape us for lack of direction and illumination.

Finally, a great work of art is bound to bring us into contact with the formal cause of the work, with the same sublime *idea* which prompted the artist to produce. We, the viewers, begin on this end, with the thing-made, whereas the artist begins at the beginning, with the *idea*. We start with the artifact, vaguely and imperfectly apprehended at first. But its meaning and significance grow as we trace our way back through the world of *signs* until we arrive home at the artist's beginning. The "explanations" are sometimes necessary signposts directing us to hitherto unsus-

pected delights which, but for them, we might never have known.

Dr. George J. McMorrow
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5

The question of how self-explanatory a representation must be can only be answered in the light of the purpose of the representation and of the responsibilities of the artist in making it and of the observer in responding to it.

Obviously, the artist is under the obligation of making what he draws or paints "say" the right thing, and say it unambiguously and not unpleasantly. He must determine whether, under the circumstances, his patron needs anything more than a reminder of some person, event, or doctrine — whether he needs, also, the enlightenment that might be afforded by a diagram, or the persuasion and edification that might be afforded by a symbol or an illustration. Naturally, if the patron does not need any of these things, the artist should give him none. And if the only medium of which the artist is master cannot do the reminding, diagramming, persuading, or edifying surely and effectively, or cannot do them as well as can words or music, the artist has no right even to pick up his pen or brush. Nor is it his privilege to use black and white, for example, to puzzle, distract, or disedify by trying to say with them what can only or best be said by red, blue, silver and gold (and vice versa — as Forain discovered in depicting the Prodigal Son). Certainly, if an artist presents something puzzlingly inappropriate or, though appropriate, puzzlingly ambiguous, susceptible of two or more equally good interpretations; or if he uses recondite, archaic, or queer imagery such as only a student of iconography could "read" surely and profitably; or if his magazine cover requires for its understanding a paragraph of interpretation (especially one that is more eloquent than the symbol

it interprets) — if any of these things are so, the man is simply not a *communicative* artist. He is only a person who likes to talk to himself at our expense.

On the other hand, the patron has his obligations also. He must expect to *earn* information or edification. And if he does not come to a work with a mind reasonably well stocked with the “meanings” of which a mnemonic design should normally remind him, or with the ability and willingness to follow a diagram carefully or interpret and respond to a symbol or illustration, then he, too, is culpable — no less culpable than the esoteric artist. He is

the kind of person who expects to master in ten easy lessons, not only the French language, but the subtleties of Racine; and when he fails to do either, blames both the language and the teacher.

Roughly, the criterion would seem, then, to be: a picture is a good picture when, under the normal circumstances of its exhibition, it can unerringly and profitably be interpreted and responded to by an observer who is reasonably well-educated and well-disposed.

John Julian Ryan
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ON BRONZE FIGURES

All bronze figures are alike in that they are made of bronze by artificial means. They differ in the purposes for which they are intended and in the technical means by which the bronze is shaped. This paper is intended to explain, in the simplest possible terms, the main features of two quite different methods of casting bronze figures and to point out the differences in their results. These methods are called the “traditional” and the “modern” techniques.

By John Howard Benson
and Graham Carey

The nature of bronze, which is the final material in both the older “traditional” method of casting statues and in its modern development, is obviously the same for both. Bronze can be melted, but shrinks badly as the metal cools and solidifies. It has great fineness of texture which enables it to take a very exact impression of the mold in which it is cast. It has great strength, can be cut with steel tools and can be given a high metallic polish with abrasives. Its surface can also be given a variety of colored textures, or *patinas*, by the application of chemicals.

It will be simpler to say as little as possible about other technical elements common to both traditional and modern methods, such as the channels which must be contrived to admit the molten metal and vents for the escape of the displaced air.

This essay does not aim to be a technical guide, but to indicate the causes of certain aesthetic effects.

The traditional technique is at its simplest in the making of quite small figures, for these can be cast solid. The Man with the Snake, here illustrated, is an example, being a little over two inches high. In small figures the problem of shrinkage is minimal, but even here there is a tendency to avoid shrinkage defects by building up the figure as a system of thin rods and plates, rather than of chunky masses. The figure is first modelled in wax. This model is then surrounded by a coat or “investment” of clay mixed with other refractory materials. When the investment is dry, it is heated red hot and the wax is melted or burned out. This process gives the technique its traditional name of *cire perdue* or lost wax. The molten metal is poured into the spaces left by the vaporized wax. The process involves only two transfers

of surface: first, from the wax to the investment, and, second, from the investment to the bronze.

For larger figures the factor of shrinkage necessitates the conception and construction of the bronze as a hollow shell. Instead of modelling a solid figure of wax, the artist models a "core" out of a material similar to that of the investment. This core is made to the exact shape and size of the hollow which is to be inside the bronze shell. When it is completed, the sculptor lays on it thin plates of wax, joins them together and gives them the exact finish that he wishes the final material—the bronze—to have later. This laying on of sheets of wax means that the core should be sculpturally conceived, as far as possible, as a system of cylinders, cones and other shapes that can be geometrically "developed." The covering of the core is much like the work of a tailor, cutting out and stitching a coat or a pair of trousers to cover a body. The more completely the core is "bounded by developable surfaces," the simpler this task will be. These surfaces may be ornamented with small applied beads or threads of wax, or with incised lines. The African head illustrates this well. The completed wax figure is then surrounded by an investment, as was the smaller one, the wax driven off and the bronze poured into its place. There have been the same two transfers of surface: from wax to clay and from clay to metal.

Founders' waxes are not all alike, but in general the wax must be soft and flexible enough to be rolled into sheets and bent around the core without cracking, sticky enough for the edges of the sheets to be joined and small dots and lines added, firm enough to be scratched or engraved, and, of course, fusible enough to be vaporized in the mold without leaving an ash. The material of the investment, where it touches the wax, must be fine enough to transfer a polished surface accurately, though the rest of the investment is usually

coarser, in order to get strength. Because the heating of the mold tends to weaken it, the figures should be conceived with a simplicity which will minimize that weakness.

When the bronze has been poured and has cooled, the investment is removed, and the final material can be finished. The bronze projections, where the supply channels and air vents were, are cut off and any defects are worked over with files, scrapers and polishing tools. At this stage in the work the formal simplicity of the shape as an organization of developable surfaces is also of importance, as it makes possible the use of simpler and more easily handled tools.

To sum up a great deal in a few words, a hollow bronze figure, cast by the traditional method, is a certain kind of a thing, and if it is to be perfect, and therefore beautiful, it must express the realities of the kind of thing that it is. As a thin metallic shell, it must be so conceived and so appear. Although invisible, the interior hollow is the essence of the design, of which the ultimate bronze surface is only the elaboration.

It is obvious that a hollow figure, conceived as a formal arrangement of more or less simple geometric shapes, overlaid with a metal shell having in its shape much of the nature of bent wax plates, and ornamented with small ribs, buttons and incised lines, will have little of the *appearance* of a human figure of flesh and blood, though it have much of the *meaning* of a human figure. It will not be naturalistic, for naturalism transfers an appearance from a context where it applies, to a context where it does not. The defect of naturalism lies in a discordance between the surface appearance of the object imitated (in this case the human body) and the nature of the object which suggests it (in this case the bronze shell). Because the figure *is* a metal shell, and can only be perfect as what it is, its beauty can only be that of what it is. When the facts of its

actual technical nature conflict with secondary aspects of the shape chosen to convey the meaning, then these effects and appearances must yield, and so they do in the great majority of traditional bronzes.

The photographs here shown well illustrate both the beauty of which the traditional method is capable, and the fact that the *meaning* of the human figure is not necessarily destroyed as one might suppose it would be, by an unnaturalistic treatment. On the contrary, the meaning is brought out more strongly in the more formal image than in a more photographic one. This is particularly the case in the Japanese example, the hand of the Nikko Bodhisattva from Nara. But, if an artist or his patron prefers naturalism to beauty, if, that is, he is content to admire a subjective image of beauty in his own mind rather than a truly perfect object, then he will probably prefer the modern lost wax technique, and to this we will now turn.

In the modern method of lost wax casting, the artist models a solid figure of clay or plasticene. As the figure is solid, he is concerned with its outer surface. As clay, unlike wax, is unable to approach closely to the character of bronze, the artist is from the start, handicapped as a designer of a bronze object. He will think less of bronze than of clay, and will often end up by giving his work a heavy clay-like patina, instead of the metallic surface characteristic of bronze. He is still further handicapped by the fact that, from the completion of the clay model onwards, the production of the bronze figure will be in the hands of, and directed by the skill of other men, men considered "technicians" rather than "artists." He has, accordingly, little opportunity to learn anything very practical about the nature and handling of the final material.

These further techniques are complicated, and require much skill, and will only be described here in briefest outline. First, the clay model is covered by a plaster "waste mold," and, when this has been

removed from the clay model and set up again, it is filled with plaster and the waste mold is carefully chipped away. So far, there have been two transfers of surface, from the clay to the waste mold, and from the waste mold to the plaster positive. From this last, a plaster "piece mold" is now made, like a three dimensional picture puzzle. This is taken off and fitted together again, the pieces being held in place by an outer plaster case. Wax is then poured into, or built onto, the inner surface of the piece mold. We have now added two more transfers of surface, from the plaster positive to the negative piece mold and from the latter to the wax shell. This last is then removed from the piece mold, and is filled with a core and surrounded with an investment of refractory material. The wax is then driven off and the molten metal poured in to take its place. This adds two more transfers of surface, bringing the total up to six. From the point of view of these transfers, the two methods may be compared in a table:

TRADITIONAL METHOD
(two transfers)

Positive wax shell
to
Negative investment
to
Positive bronze shell

MODERN METHOD
(six transfers)

Positive clay model
to
Negative plaster waste mold
to
Positive plaster figure
to
Negative plaster piece mold
to
Positive wax shell
to
Negative investment
to
Positive bronze shell

This table illustrates the chief artistic ad-



JAPAN Detail (left hand) of large hollow figure From Bodhisattva attendant on the Buddha of Healing. The gesture is said to represent the power of the sun to draw all things to itself by invisible threads.

AFRICA. Man Holding Snake.
(twice actual size)
Contemporary example. Shows well the
affinity between instrumental material —
wax — and final material — bronze.



Courtesy Rhode Island School of Design.

INDIA. So-called Dancing Siva.
Hollow bronze figure. The spiritual
principal of the cosmos conceived
as order, or a great dance. This
example indicates the complication
of shape which is possible to
the traditional lost wax method.

AFRICA. Hollow head, School of Benin.
Good example of the application of
wax details to the wax shell. The
eyes seem to have been
originally inlaid.



Courtesy Rhode Island School of Design.

vantage of the traditional method. It is a matter of general experience that the more handling an artifact receives *under the discipline of the artist's hand and eye*, the more perfect it will be; whereas, the more processes it goes through *outside the artist's strict control*, the more the original image will be blurred and distorted. With the traditional method, a single man customarily acted the various parts of designer, modeller, caster, foundry man and finisher. Although on large works he had many assistants, a single individual was in control of all the stages, from the first rough sketch to the finished bronze in its predestined place. If anything went wrong at any stage of the process, his was the eye that detected the error, and his the judgment that decided what to do about it. The traditional method is thus the better of the two from the point of view of artistic quality, and a study of the illustrations, especially of the hand from Nara will, I think, convince the reader that this is so. The harmony of the final and the instrumental materials — bronze and wax; the adaptation of both to the types of shapes used; the perfect wedding of these shapes to the intention of the gesture; and the sensitiveness with which the work is finished; all these would be difficult, if not impossible, with a more complicated method and a divided artistic responsibility.

The chief advantage of the modern technique is that it is adapted to the social structure of which it is a part. For centuries a process has been going on which has separated "designers" from "technicians," and as a result the "artist-foundryman" is practically non-existent. A method

which reflects the realities of the contemporary social structure has much to be said for it. In addition, the "modern" technique insures itself against accidents which may happen in the later stages of the work. If something goes seriously wrong at the pouring in a traditional shop, practically the whole work is lost; while if the same thing happens in a modern shop, new molds can easily be made. This is a definite factor in appraising the two methods.

The intention of this essay is to point out the greater beauty which results from the use of the more governable method, and to show some of the causes of this greater beauty. This is a theoretical discussion, but perhaps the reader should not be left without a word of practical advice. There seems to be no doubt of the aesthetic superiority of the traditional method, but for large figures it is as far beyond our reach today as is true Gothic architecture. We have not a social structure capable of manning it. Artists should therefore be dissuaded from attempting to make any but small bronzes by the traditional method. For larger figures they should use the modern method with a full understanding of its deficiencies and with a determination to diminish them. An artist need not fall into naturalism merely because the modern method makes such a lapse easy. He need not be as ignorant as he usually is of the details of the technical work. Nor should he ignore the possibility that his technicians, or some of them, might be interested in *his* problems, if they were given an opportunity. A lifetime of work animated by such convictions, might well be the beginning of a true school of bronze statuary art.

I quite concede that there is something strictly more sincere in the architecture which is architecture, and which is especially building. Mr. Eric Gill once said that in sculpture a man must be a stone man, but the sort of man that God would have made if he had used stone. It is the glory of the great Gothic, and the best Romanesque, that no liveliness of detail ever makes us forget that the house of God is still a house, and a house made of stone.

G. K. Chesterton in *The Resurrection of Rome*.

THE RELEVANCE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH FOR THE ARTIST

Insisting that no truly Christian artist comes to full stature without benefit of the liturgy, Father King, president of the C.A.A., describes the values inherent in living a life in the spirit of the Church. This paper was originally presented in the Workshop on Art in the Secondary School at the Catholic University in June. The complete text will appear in the Proceedings of the Workshop.

By the Reverend David Ross King

Art is a necessity for man. St. Thomas says: "No man can live without pleasure. Therefore a man deprived of the pleasures of the spirit goes over to the pleasures of the flesh."¹

We only live, only suspire

Consumed by either fire or fire.²

Art rejoices the mind, and "from afar off, without thinking, it prepares the human race for contemplation (the contemplation of the Saints) the spiritual joy of which surpasses every other joy."³

Art, then, is not a luxury of the privileged, whether of wealth or culture, but a fundamental need of everyone. As a habit, art is proper to every man, for we should all be makers; and its works are for the enjoyment of everyone, since we all need its pleasures.

Both aspects merit emphasis, and to emphasize the latter, the usefulness of art, is not to jeopardize the autonomy of art. Art does serve ends outside itself; for it is, as Pope Pius XII has stated,

"in certain respects, the most living, the most all-inclusive expression of human thought and feeling, and, moreover, the most broadly understandable, because art, speaking directly to the senses, knows not the diversity of tongues, but . . . reaches depths in the mind and heart of him who beholds or listens, which words, either spoken or written, with their insufficiently shaded analytical precision, cannot attain."⁴

The artist intent simply upon the production of a work good-in-itself will inevitably, unless he hides his work from his fellows,

influence their well-being for good or ill. For the artist is always a man; he operates as a human being; what he *is* leaves a mark on what he *does*. And those who look upon his works are human beings, affected in their very soul by the experience he provides.

The artist's personal status marks his work, his attitudes of mind and dispositions of soul just as truly as the sureness of his hand, if it be strong, or its uncertainty, if it be palsied. This is the reason the brochure that announced our workshop pointed out that creative endeavors are necessarily rooted in the soul of the artist and are the results of his meditation, contemplation and spiritual formation. To a great extent, artistic works reflect the character of him who brings them into being; they will be sincere or false, serious or frivolous, profound or superficial according to the spiritual acumen of the artist. Should not genuine spirituality inspire, influence and augment creativeness and, to some extent, establish the character of the work of art?

I would emphasize that in itself art is autonomous.⁵ Its laws are the laws of art itself; it is concerned wholly with the good of the thing-to-be-made. Whereas the whole soul of the artist effects and controls his work, it does so by the artistic habit⁶, whose one concern is the right making of things, not just this or that class of things but things in general. . . .

When I propose the question whether the spiritual growth of the man promotes the artistic growth of the artist, I would

not suggest that supernatural formation can be a substitute for natural gifts, or acquisition of technical knowledge, or skill in manual dexterity. All of these are taken for granted. Just now I only remark that they are not acquired and do not operate in a vacuum but in a person and in a culture which determine what they are to become and what is to be done with them.⁷ These factors occupy our attention: 1) the supernatural being and well-being of the artist; 2) the effects of his supernaturality upon his work. One object is in view: to propose means that promote maximum spiritual growth, with a view to maximum effect on artistic endeavor.

To state this objective is already to make clear my position regarding the effects of the artist's supernatural condition: I believe it has determining force in effecting truly Christian works of art. With Dr. George Flahiff I believe:

"A work of art will be truly Christian in character to the precise degree that the artist himself *is* Christian and that his work, in its execution, is true art. All the former without the latter would be necessarily abortive and fail to achieve *artistic* expression; all the latter without the former could be technically perfect, yet would lack the authentically Christian spirit that is the very essence of a *Christian* work of art."⁸

Art expresses personality: when the artistic habit functions, the personality itself is thrusting outward to impress itself upon matter, so that the work carries within itself something of the being of the maker.⁹ Therefore, the artist's state of soul, as well as his native ability and technical training, leave traces like fingerprints in the things he makes. . . . "By their fruits you will know them. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?"¹⁰ There is a holy power in the things holy people make when they are good makers.

This is a consequence of the Lord's work of redemption.

The fall of man in Paradise affected all material creation.¹¹ Satan, the "thrower of

things off the track, upsetter, mischief-maker . . . brought in the law of decay and consumption in inanimate nature, death in the vegetable and animal world, moral death and original sin in the world of man."¹² He tried to possess himself of the sovereignty of things, "wreathing nature and as it were constructing it to his own purposes."¹³

In Adam, mankind coöperated in the diabolical attempt to divert creation from its Creator; in Christ, mankind is called to coöperate in the grand work of restoration. Not only in the soul of the individual; not only in the souls of his brethren; but in all material things. All the effects of the fall must, in the end, be overcome. Satan would have us adore him and adore ourselves, in our employment of God's material gifts: "Command that these stones become loaves of bread."¹⁴ Christ calls us to the universal praise of God, in our use of matter: "Whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God."¹⁵

Obviously, supernatural means must have the primacy in restoring all things to God in Christ. Yet, other means are not to be despised. One of these is the practice of art: by it we turn the face of created things towards the Face of their Maker.

Obviously, to make secondary means most effective, they should be infused with life by the primary. This is where holiness comes in.

Holiness is something very real; it is more than doing good and avoiding evil — these things even the heathen can do.¹⁶ Our holiness can be only a sharing in God's holiness, a participation in the divine nature.¹⁷ This spells transformation of the old man into a new man: a *christening* of the whole person. All a Christian's works are to bear the spark of the holiness within; the shared divine life overflows. What a Christian says and does show what he *is*: the things he makes, too, are signs of his being. The converts whom the apostles greeted as "saints, holy ones"¹⁸ were full-

time saints. So are we: visiting the sick as saints, saying our prayers as saints, performing all the acts of religion as saints. But also we handle God's material gifts as saints, and transform and shape them as saints in our artistic activities. Or is the life of Christ within us divided?

We know from unhappy experience, however, that this objective holiness God shares with us may be buried under a burden of unregenerate dispositions. The need to "have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus"¹⁹ is manifest. How best to acquire it? How best to become *wholly* Christian and *whole* Christians, to form and confirm the integral Christian personality? How is the Catholic artist to become "one man," all his powers consolidated, all his works of a kind?

Since many Catholic artists have become artists like pagans and produced works that are not at all Christian, our question is plainly in order. These men were reborn and given a share in God's life and holiness, but they "spoke words" that came not from the mind of Christ in them.

To assure the maximum of supernatural formation so as to impress the maximum of Christian character upon the artist's works, I propose that he live and worship as intensely and fully as possible with the Church. Her liturgy will make him what he ought to be. It will make him a man of God and a good co-worker with God. It will make him *whole*. To make us whole is, indeed, the great work of the liturgy, after the glorification of God (to which, in fact, our wholeness is in turn a contribution).

1) *The liturgy makes us Christian*. It is by means of the liturgy that we became Christian and become more fully Christian, were made holy and then more holy. Incorporation into Christ is effected by liturgy: baptism. Conformed to the likeness of him to whom we cry, "Thou alone are holy,"²⁰ we are rightly called "saints" on his account, and the Father looks upon us with complacency for he sees sons. Our

Christ-likeness is deepened and strengthened by liturgy: the sacrament of confirmation. Christ's life in us is nourished, fortified, built up, expressed by liturgy: the Eucharistic sacrament and sacrifice. It is made fruitful by liturgy: the sacraments of matrimony and holy orders. It is healed and restored by liturgy: the sacrament of penance. It is perfected for glory by liturgy: last anointing. In liturgy we many, being made one Body, praise and adore, petition and thank the heavenly Father with one voice, the voice of Christ our Head: the divine office.

We see, then, that the liturgy is not something optional, something a Catholic can take or leave as personal fancy dictates. Outside the liturgy there is no salvation!

No truly Christian *artist* is made without the effects of the liturgy, simply because no Christian *person* is made without them.

2) *The liturgy schools us in the works of love*. To take a consistently active part, "worthily, attentively, devoutly," in the renewal of Christ's mysteries, all mysteries of love, is to "comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, in order that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God."²¹ For as Pope Pius XII has written, "the liturgical year . . . is not a cold and lifeless representation of the events of the past, or a simple and bare record of a former age. It is rather Christ himself who is ever living in his Church. Here he continues that journey of immense mercy which he lovingly began in his mortal life, going about doing good with the design of bringing men to know his mysteries and in a way live by them. These mysteries are ever present and active. . . ."²² The liturgy effects what it signifies, it produces what it represents. Thus Christ's mysteries become our mysteries; the "love of Christ impells us"²³ to acts informed with his Spirit, the Spirit of love.

Love is a state of being, and more; it is

an impulsion to make.²⁴ The lover traditionally sings. To learn to sing, to be makers, we must learn to love; it is all part of the process of becoming whole. The worship of the Bride of Christ is a love song—to join our minds and hearts and voices is to become more fully what we want to be and have been created to be, lovers and makers. “It is man’s destiny,” Father Vann has said, “first to love and then by love to mould his environment. . . . We live in a world which has lost art and beauty in its daily life because it has forgotten how to love and worship.”²⁵

The love fostered by the liturgy is three-fold: love for the world, for mankind, for God.

For the world, which is a sign and a gift of God’s goodness and beauty, a proclamation of his love. How tenderly its elements are handled in the Church’s worship, and how wisely, under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit: water, oil, bread and wine, the very salt of the earth! How like she is to her Master, who used even clay and spittle to comfort man and glorify his Father! The liturgy teaches us to love the world God made, and to hate only the world unmade by sin.

For man, because the liturgy is a public work, a people’s work, the great work of God’s “chosen race.”²⁶ We have all alike been incorporated into one Body, and under its Head and through its Head we worship and act as one. Under the breath of the Spirit by whose power the whole Body worships, the embers of love in each member’s heart glow bright, the consuming flames leap high. Can a man fail to love his own hand or his own eye? No more can he fail to grow in love of the other members of the Body in whose single praise of God he “worthily, attentively, devoutly,” participates.

For God. To God’s good pleasure is every act, every gesture, every word of the sacred liturgy directed, as the love-making of the spotless Bride at the feet of her Lord. Indeed, it is for his love that the

world he made is loved and the men he saves are loved. He is the whole reason for the liturgy, its only explanation, the cause and object of the love it embodies and pours out like fire over the earth. Only by love’s light, then, can the liturgy in its entirety and in its parts be comprehended. It is to instill love, dynamic and fruitful, that it operates on man’s behalf, having first existed on God’s behalf. “He has first loved us.”²⁷

We readily see how this love will bear upon the habit of the artist.

“Love . . . moves the virtue of art like an instrument. . . . The consequence is that the work will be Christian in proportion as the love is alive. Let there be no mistake: it is the actuality of love, contemplation in charity, which is here required. A Christian work would have the artist, as man, a saint. It would have him possessed by love. Then he may go and do as he pleases.”²⁸

Imbued with the true Christian spirit at its “primary and indispensable source,”²⁹ the artist finds that his “contemplation in charity” begins to vivify his artistic contemplation, so that his works in their turn are endowed with Christian character.

Fra Angelico’s saying takes on new depths of meaning: “To paint the things of Christ, the artist must live with Christ.”

3) *The liturgy schools us in response to values*. As we humbly and sincerely take our full and proper part in the celebration of the liturgy, we gradually make its attitudes more and more our own. The one thing necessary becomes the thing most desired: no mess of pottage long remains very attractive. This is because there is achieved a progressively deeper immersion in Christ, in living and thinking and speaking and doing and making according to the Spirit of Christ, in following Christ with ever fuller acceptance of his cross, in practical love of neighbor.³⁰

Thus, for example, the liturgy moves us to ascetical practices, not for their own value (they have none), but for their instrumental value: they are understood as promoting our transformation into the

Crucified, our introduction into the secrets of the Father. Death to self is comprehended as worthwhile, since upon it depends Christ's living fully in us. This kind of response to values carries over into the Catholic's life as artist. The medieval sculptor and architect, formed in the school of the liturgy, accepted spontaneously and without self-consciousness his anonymity: to have signed sacred works would have seemed an anomaly.

We grow in our understanding that all that has been created — whether it belongs to the world of lifeless matter, as the seas and the deserts; or to the realm of organic life, as the fish and the beasts that roam in them; or to spiritual realities, as a work of art — exists in order to fulfill the divine idea in its regard and unfolds the fulness of the values to which it was ordained. These values are rays from God's being, who is all holiness. Whatever is, possesses value. All values are like dew falling from heaven, and like incense rising to God, as the formulae of the liturgy tirelessly make known.

The man formed by the liturgy is a man awake in the highest sense of the word. While his inward ear is open to the voice of God, his outward ear is alert to the hymn of all God's earthly "words," his creatures. He develops a consciousness of values, an adequate response to values, a sense of the right gradation of values. The more awakened a man is in this manner, the more fully he exists as a person, the more genuinely he lives, the more he is an integral personality. In inner response to the objective, hierarchical order of values lies the secret of true personality. The Christian, then, who is intent upon the artistic creation of objects that are expressive of right values, will acquire his surest personal formation by means of the liturgy.

4) *The liturgy makes us realists.* Art has always been aware that in matter there is infinitely more than matter, and has used symbol to make us aware of reality. The

archetype of all Christian art is the Church's liturgy.³¹ Under essential symbols, and by their means, it communicates to men's souls the effects of the most consequential of all realities, Christ's death and resurrection. All its symbols and signs put us in touch with the realities of God and his works. Romantic delusions shrivel up in the clear light and burning heat of the liturgy; sentimentality gasps and dies.

For the liturgy is a grand affirmation, an assent to *being*. It is the ringing *Amen* of the Spouse to her Lord, to all he has done, to all he has made, to all he will do before the consummation of the ages. Eric Gill liked to show how far from this sublime affirmation is the modern notion, product of mere human speculation, that would reduce spirituality to a series of negations, so that the saint is simply a Christian who does *not* marry, who does *not* drink beer, who does *not* take a bath.³² We affirm that the saint is one who *does* things affirmatively: he glorifies God in the indispensable worship of God's Church, and then in his own secret heart and in his acceptance of the world just as God made it, and then in his acts and in his making. Even his denials are actually affirmations: he rejects Satan's "constrictions" on nature to assert God's everlasting dominion, he rejects his own unregenerate propensities to allow the triumph of Christ's regenerative grace. If he remains single, he *embraces* celibacy as a positive good. If he withholds food and drink from the body, it is to *give* more to the soul. Always he cries: "Yes, Lord!"

Contempt for corporeal realities is left to the Manichees and the Puritans. We condemn only Satan's misuse of them and man's affection for them for their own sake. We do not embrace angelism, as though we had no nature of our own. We acknowledge a vocation: to labor joyously towards the restoration of a wounded world, to bring all things to good health in Christ. In this vocation there is no room for vulgarity or sentimentality or sensual-

ity, all symptoms of the very sickness we combat.

Maurice Zundel has said it beautifully: "The visible world is in our hands like the bread multiplied by Jesus' love. We must not let a fragment of it be lost."³³

What a joyous life is the real Christian's and the real Christian artist's! His heart is inundated by the waters of joy that rush through the city of God! He experiences exultation in his conviction that Christ has truly risen, that he has risen also in his members, that he has endowed them with his very life, that he has become their Head and ordained them to share in his glory. Even in tribulation he can be glad;



for he knows he is but filling up what is yet wanting in the Body whose life is his own, whose praise is his, whose sacrifice is his. Excessive self-reliance and morbid self-distrust have no place here, in the mentality shaped by the liturgy; for Christ has become the vital center of all the artist's activities. Even his creative struggles, then, turn into labors of joy.

Can we wonder that our Holy Father, Pius XII, has said: "The most pressing duty of Christians is to live the liturgical life, and increase and cherish its supernatural spirit"?³⁴

This is the place to pause in order to dispel possible misconceptions. We are not forgetting the sermon on the mount, or the necessity of personal effort, or the imitation of Christ the Exemplar. It will be well to remind ourselves, however, that the imitation of Christ in the moral order depends absolutely upon our incorporation into him in the sacramental order.

The latter effects a quasi-physical union with Christ, in consequence of which we function as his members; thus personal adherence to Jesus, by fidelity to his law and the practice of his counsels, is made possible. But our life in Christ is essentially *one*: we do not live "liturgically" during Mass and office, and then live "morally" while doing the duties of our state of life. Always the same life of Christ in us expresses itself; our sacramental and moral acts are manifestations of the one Christ-life.³⁵

This is why there is no real conflict between "liturgical piety" and "extra-liturgical piety" except in the minds of persons who have failed to understand what the liturgy is. To distinguish between public worship and private devotions is not to set them in opposition — *that* has been done only by those who, in ignorance, despise the sacred liturgy, and by those who think they love the liturgy whereas they are only enamored of its outward forms. Catholics who "live the liturgical life . . . and cherish its supernatural spirit," according to the directives of Pius XII, are simply setting their lives in order, so that God may be glorified and they themselves sanctified in accordance with *the divine plan*. They have reached an hierarchical evaluation of the kinds of worship and devotional practices. They "draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountains"³⁶ before having recourse to cisterns mere men "have digged to themselves."³⁷

This is the place to point out, too, that piety separated from liturgy tends to fall apart into sentimentality and sensuality. These diminish, rather than enlarge, the life of the soul, because they are indulgence of the false self. Piety that develops in practical independence from the liturgy tends away from the central revealed truths (whose relevance to devotion and spiritual growth is lost sight of) and towards ideas that are peripheral to the redemptive and sanctifying work of Christ. There results a lack of balance and dog-

matic soundness. One may cite the contrast between the petitions of the litany of the Sacred Heart and the terminology of many common Sacred Heart prayers. The imagery of the former is drawn from sacred scripture and the liturgy; it is virile, it nourishes. The latter terminology was concocted by minds quite uninfluenced by either; it reeks of sensuality, it debilitates.³⁸ Let us face the facts: there is a piety, not infected by the specific heresies of Protestantism, but undermined by unconscious conformity to its basic principle: the principle of private judgment. The individual's personal preferences take precedence over everything else, at all times, in his devotional activities. Mr. X "prefers his own devotions" even at Mass; he passes the time getting caught up on his Little Chapelet of St. Pablum. Mrs. Z. so loves the Little League of the Little Thieves of St. Dismas that she buries herself in its Little Manual while Christ and his members are offering the essential sacrifice. No one will claim that these good souls are doing what they ought to be doing just then and there. And it is very unlikely they are becoming what they ought to become. And still less likely that they will make as they ought to make, or appreciate the works of others who do make well. There is less probability that the Catholic who consciously separates himself from the common worship of the Mystical Body will become absorbed into God, than that he will spend his life wrapt, so to speak, in sterile contemplation of his own navel.

Does one have to ask *why* religious art made by the victims of such piosity turns out earthly, insipid, meretricious? A picture of a consumptive young lady in crepe whiskers, for example, is palmed off as an image of The Pantocrator — one is not at all surprised. To divorce making from the Church's worship and from private devotion informed by its spirit is to renounce the wholeness of Christian life that alone gives good promise of integral Christian work. It is to forfeit consciousness of the

central dogmas as motivating forces.

The way back to God is the way of the Church's worship.

The way back to the true Christian spirit is the way of Christian worship.

The way back to holy Catholic art is the way of the liturgy.

Now, the liturgy is not intended to develop art techniques; that is not at all its purpose. Nevertheless, it powerfully inspires its participants to do so.

When we examine the spirit embodied in the liturgy and impressed by it upon those who participate sincerely and intelligently, we find this spirit revealed in three ways, as Dr. Dietrich Von Hildebrand has shown:³⁹ (1) In the liturgical act as such, the loving sacrifice of the Lord; in the sacraments that communicate his love; in the divine office, his own loving adoration of God; (2) In the atmosphere conveyed by the sundry prayers, hymns, antiphons, etc. (3) In the structure of the liturgy, with its alternative accentuation of praise and petition, adoration and thanksgiving; with its succession of feasts of Christ's mysteries and of his triumphs in his glorified members, all presented in hierarchical arrangement according to their relative values.

Not only do the essential sacrifice and sacraments pour grace into the soul of the participant (which is the important fact, of course); but the atmosphere he breathes as he constantly has recourse to the sacred rites refreshes his whole being; and the structure of the individual feasts and the year moulds his mind and inflames his imagination. The externals of the liturgy are but the fringes of Christ's garments; yet, if we touch them with faith, we shall be made whole.

Through participation in the celebration of the liturgy we are not only *doing* something but *becoming* something. We are entering into the life of God, and also into the life of his whole creation; we are learning, deep in the soul, to make. The integrity, perfection, and clarity of the

liturgy, fashioned by the Creator Spirit, will begin to be manifest in the human artist's work.

"And then," exclaims Father Vann, "some people think the effort to restore the liturgy is an aesthetic preoccupation of purists — when it is a fight to bring back the stuff of life."⁴⁰

Should not the artist fall on his knees before God in thanksgiving for the inef-fable gift of the liturgy? Consider the limitations of man, how readily he loses the spirit of Jesus, how he tends to make for himself an image of Christ according to his own narrowness, how prone he is to snatch creation to his breast as though he were its end, how likely he is to employ God's gifts for his own glory. From all this the ever-active Spirit of Christ, oper-ating in the liturgy, can save us.

After Moses had laid down prescriptions for the celebration of the Jewish liturgy (which, holy as it was, only foreshadowed the liturgy of the new covenant), he ut-tered words I should like to repeat with an invitation that artists make of them a new and personal application.

Of liturgy he said: "This is the word, which the Lord hath commanded: do it, and his glory will appear to you."⁴¹



NOTES

¹St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 35, a. 4, and 2.

²T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1943), p. 38.

³Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 62.

⁴Pius XII, "Address to the First International Congress of Catholic Artists," *Liturgical Arts*, November, 1950, p. 3.

⁵Cf. Gerald Vann, O.P., *The Heart of Man* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1945), p. 97. Jacques Maritain, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-16, 31-39.

⁶Cf. George B. Flahiff, C.S.B., "Can Modern Art Be Christian," *The Catholic Art Quarterly*,

December, 1952, p. 8. Jacques Maritain, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

⁷Cf. George B. Flahiff, C.S.B., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹Cf. Pius XII, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4. Gerald Vann, O.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰Matt. 7:14.

¹¹Cf. Anselm Stolz, O.S.B., *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection* (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1938), pp. 54-71.

¹²Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Note-Books and Papers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 347.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 346.

¹⁴Matt. 4:3.

¹⁵1 Cor. 10:31.

¹⁶Cf. Matt. 5:47.

¹⁷Cf. 2 Pet. 1:4.

¹⁸E.g. Rom. 16:15; Eph. 1:1.

¹⁹Phil. 2:5.

²⁰*Gloria* of the Mass.

²¹Eph. 3:18-19.

²²Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, n.d.g.), No. 165, p. 57.

²³2 Cor. 5:14.

²⁴Cf. Gerald Vann, O.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 92.

²⁶1 Pet. 2:9.

²⁷1 Jn. 4:10.

²⁸Jacques Maritain, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁹Pius X, *Moto Proprio*, November 22, 1903. Quoted in Virgil Michel, O.S.B., *The Liturgy of the Church* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1937), p. 18.

³⁰Cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Liturgy and Personality* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1943), pp. 17-19.

³¹Cf. Gerald Vann, O.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99.

³²Cf. Eric Gill, *Art* (London: Bodley Head Press, 1949), pp. 125-130.

³³Maurice Zundel, *The Splendour of the Liturgy* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1944), p. 291.

³⁴Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, No. 197, p. 66.

³⁵Cf. Jean Hild, O.S.B., *Dimanche et Vie Pascale* (Paris: Editions Brépols, 1949), pp. 67-68.

³⁶Is. 12:3.

³⁷Jer. 2:13.

³⁸Cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *op. cit.*, p. 167. Clifford Howell, S.J., *Of Sacraments and Sacrifice* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1952), pp. 153-163.

³⁹Cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-40.

⁴⁰Gerald Vann, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁴¹Lev. 9:6.

PIETY TOWARDS THE WORLD

This brief essay which resolves, with consummate skill, the problem of the relationship between nature and the God of nature, is reprinted from Conflict and Light, edited by Bruno de Jesus-Marie, O.C.D., translated by Pamela Carswell and Cecily Hastings, copyright Sheed & Ward, New York, 1952.

By Gustave Thibon

The world is deep, said Nietzsche. And that is true. But those who have caught a glimpse of supernatural reality, if only in a momentary flash, and have tasted, however fleetingly, the peace that the world cannot give, know that God is deeper than the world. The problem of their mutual relationship and of how to keep the balance between the two depths is certainly the most important one facing a contemplative soul. Sanctity is the only complete solution of it.

The interior conflict of this tension between nature and grace, the world and God, is something essential to Christian faith and love. It is that "agony" (in the original sense of the word) spoken of by Miguel de Unamuno. But the tension can be fruitful only if it remains dialectic and provisory in character. If a final break is made between the two terms, if the world exclusive of God or God exclusive of the world begins to be the sole object of piety, from that moment the soul ceases to possess either the truth of the world or the truth of God, for they are the two poles of our life, and the concept of each evokes and sustains the concept of the other. There is a kind of piety which looks only at creation (atheistic pantheism). But this purely cosmic piety misunderstands and distorts the world it means to adore, for the secret of the world is in God who created it. There is also a kind of piety which looks only at God. But this "a-cosmic" piety (so frequent, alas, in "spiritual" people) misunderstands and distorts God, for God's secret is in his love

for his creation. Only he who can love God through creation and creation through God can escape from this double danger. He will not reject the world, like the sterile pietists who despise creation, for he knows that the world is deep. But neither will he adore it like the idolaters of nature-worship, for he knows that the world is not infinite: everything in it speaks of God, but none of it is God. The Christian faith calls us to transcend the world. In the strict sense of the words, this means a call to attain to the world first. Thus true cosmic piety and the true worship of the transcendent God become one. Otherwise the world and God must either remain separate or be falsely confused. In either case they will only be experienced as a dream, not truly lived in their inseparable reality.

Whatever may have been said to the contrary, the ascetical and mystical doctrine of St. John of the Cross strictly fulfills these two requirements. Superficial observers may have accused him of laying almost exclusive stress on the divine transcendence and on the necessity of a complete break with created things. What is overlooked is that we have here a dialectical tension found also in the Gospel: apparent contradictions (I pray not for the world . . . God so loved the world) meeting in a higher unity. In actual fact, there is nothing that can do more to deepen our piety towards the world than the jealous worship of the ineffable transcendence of God. The saint orders us uncompromisingly to turn away from creatures. But what does he attack in creatures but the unlimited occasions of idolatry that they offer so long as our souls are imperfectly

purified? Created things, he tells us, are nothing but malice, vileness and nothingness. But these are not in the things themselves but in our concupiscence, which degrades and defiles everything it touches. It is only this blind, destructive concupiscence which St. John of the Cross relentlessly hunts down. And it is in the interests of true knowledge and genuine love of creatures that he does it. For once the soul, detached at last from itself and from all that is not All, is in communion with the divine transcendence, it possesses, in all their original unity, depth and transparency, all the things which we darken and break to pieces by our idolatrous attachment to them. This is the meaning of a phrase in the Upanishads, "Through detachment enjoy all things." Is not the world infinitely purer, subtler, more mysterious — more real, in fact — for a saint seeing it with the eyes of God than for a

man who hurls himself greedily upon it as upon a prey? No one has a greater sense of the beauty of the world than St. John of the Cross. He knows that all things have been clothed in beauty by the Divine glance that has rested upon them. He knows that even the senses, whose night he has preached and described with such rigour, shall share one day in the Divine joy of the spirit, that they "shall see and shall come down to the waters. . . ." There is no impurity in things; it is our hearts that project their impurity onto things. But "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." And seeing God, they shall see the works of God, and seeing them with the same eyes and loving them with the same heart, they will find "all these things very good." A deepening of our piety towards the world is inseparable from a deepening of our piety towards God.

STUDENT SECTION

The Student Section is for all Catholic students interested in any way in the arts. This is the first article in our section that deals with the activities of Catholic art students in a non-Catholic college. It is encouraging — and perhaps provocative of some self-examination — to read how these students, not surrounded by Catholic influences, have recognized the need of a thoroughly Christian art to restore a Christian culture. In secular surroundings they have set out "to motivate the best artistic craftsmanship to find its highest purpose . . . in the service of God." This account of the accomplishments of the Newman Club at the University of Illinois should give us added impetus — and perhaps an example to follow — in our Apostolate of the Arts.

CHRISTOCENTRIC ART FESTIVAL HELD AT UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

In the spring of 1953, more than four hundred persons attended the opening session of the annual Christocentric Arts Festival sponsored by the Newman Club of the University of Illinois. Those who attended saw exhibitions of painting, sculpture, drawing, architecture, crafts, photography, dance, drama, creative writing, music performance, and composition by artists, students, and amateurs.

The first Christocentric Arts Festival was held by the Newman Club at the University in 1950 under the direction of Lillian Russell, present Newman Graduate-Faculty president.

When Miss Russell started the Festival, she had a threefold purpose in mind: 1. to motivate the production of good Christocentric works of art on the student level, and to discover and encourage student talent in all the arts; 2. to awaken in all artists and art lovers a new appreciation and consciousness of modern Christian art

by demonstrating its vitality and significance in the expression of spiritual values; 3. to provide a center in this area where the best in modern Christian art can be seen and purchased.

"Christocentric art has not only a good and holy idea, but in its final form it also brings the artist and his art closer to Christ," explained the director of the 1953 Christocentric Art Festival, Eleanor O'Brian of Buffalo, New York, a graduate student in special education. The Festival is dedicated to fostering a living Christian art which, in the words of Pope Pius XII, taking its "inspiration from religion . . . may shine with serene light, may greatly promote civilization, and may contribute to the glory of God and the sanctification of souls."

The need for the arts within the Church has never ceased. The Church can offer the artist and laity a hierarchy of values which are a prerequisite for artistic production. But three important things are lacking: trained Christian artists to produce good work; an enlightened clergy to sanction this production; and an artistically trained laity to benefit from it. The Church does not train her own artists and is therefore often forced to employ people who cannot quite reflect her true image. The Festival is an attempt to remedy this situation by introducing Christocentric art to the students.

The Festival is divided into three sections: 1. the exhibits of contemporary artists; 2. a competitive division which is open to all university students; 3. a division open to amateurs outside the University.

Among the forty guest-artists exhibiting their work at this year's Festival were Jean Charlot, internationally known painter; Renard Koehnemann, formerly of Champaign, best known for his hand-wrought wedding rings; Carl W. Merschel, distinguished for his ceramics and wood cuts; Ilse von Drage, goldsmith, known for her enameled silver crosses; Ann H. Grill,

head of the art department of Barat College; Sister Mary of the Compassion; Tom Steinbach, industrial designer; Trevor H. Moore, liturgical artist; Peter Stavis, who designs cards and does leather work; Father Norbert, calligrapher; Ed Demers; Harriet Stevens, known for her hand-made vestments; Leonard Zamiska, University of Illinois art instructor. Work of the Pio Decimo Press, the *Liturgical Arts* magazine, and *Designs for Christian Living* was also shown.

The Festival competition is open to students of all faiths because many artists outside the Church do center their life on Christ. In this way we hope to show the public how widespread is the interest in Christocentric art, and at the same time acquaint our brothers of other faiths with the Catholic viewpoint on art and creative activities. Thus we will accomplish a work of apostolic nature.

Symbolic "Christocentric Medals" are awarded first-place winners in the competitive fields, open both to students of the University and to outside talent. Winners are judged on holiness of idea, aptness of form, and dedication of heart. Judging is done by members of the faculty.

Through the Christocentric Arts Festivals at the University of Illinois a representative collection has been made of contemporary Christocentric works of art on the student and professional levels. The number of student artists who have taken part in the Festivals has increased each year. More than one hundred student entries were on display in the 1953 Festival. The professional work, representative of some of the most outstanding Catholic artists of today, is expressive of the encouragement and inspiration these artists are anxious to give to students; and the number of persons in the community interested in the Festival shows that people are becoming more aware of liturgical and Christian art.

Joan Prindiville
University of Illinois



The Newman foundation of the University of Illinois sponsored its third Christocentric Arts Festival in Champaign last Spring. The yearly affair gathers students, artists, writers, and musicians around an exhibition and demonstrations to show the character of today's religious art.

Above: general view of the gallery.

Right: a student's oil painting, "Gethsemane" by Agnes Bradley





Left: Small ceramic figure, nine inches high, black terra cotta with grog, glazed, of Christ the High Priest made by Carl Merschel. Holes in hands and feet are to attach figure to larger cross.



Right: Red, blue, and gold vestments made by Ann Grill for the chapel at the Sheil School of Social Studies in Chicago.

"GOOGAUDERY" & THE MOTU PROPRIO

In reminding us of the anniversary of the publication of the encyclical on sacred music, Father McNaspy, S.J., who has recently published a translation and commentary on the Motu Proprio, here suggests that the attitude of the Church on the rôle of art in sacred worship has a direct bearing on the work of those engaged in the practice of the visual arts.

By Clement J. McNaspy, S.J.

By now everyone, even the most immune and unmusical, must know that St. Cecilia's feast this year marks the golden jubilee of Blessed Pius X's *Motu Proprio* on sacred music. For some months there have appeared articles, even in unlikely journals, giving appraisals that vary in mood from unfettered exuberance (as though all were already accomplished) to jaundiced cynicism (as though the cause were utterly hopeless).

Catholic artists (I take the word to mean here craftsmen of the visual arts) may be disposed to feel neglected, or even to envy their musical confrères' greener pastures. Why not a special *Motu Proprio* on sacred painting, stained glass, statuary, architecture, or other arts as well? I, for one, do not pretend to know the answer. Could it be suggested that music, about 1900, was in an even more deplorable plight than her sister arts? Or, perhaps, could music, being temporal, hence transitory (should one now say "existential"?), surely more fragile than the more stable visual arts, be more easily directed and controlled? After all, a church, once committed to existence, must last several generations; responsibility rested, once and for all, only on pastor and architect. One cannot do much about St. Paphnutius Cathedral once it is built. But this morning's Mass music is already of the past, hardly a thing at all; tomorrow's is not yet a thing (*pace* Suarez). For music simply on paper is not yet music; its coming to life will be contingent on pastor, composer, director, organist, and heaven knows what sort of choir, all of whom share responsibility.

Thus music, with so many prospects for disaster, would seem to call for more guidance and supervision.

No wonder then that every serious practitioner of sacred music is thankful for the *Motu Proprio*. Since 1903 a great deal has been done, and with almost every high Mass today Blessed Pius must receive an added, if accidental, measure of heavenly beatitude. Since his day, almost gone are the grosser 19th century abuses: outrageous distortion of sacred texts, much operatic trumpery, crass sentimentality, and an unlovely façade of pomp. Best of all, some sense of the liturgical function and of participation has come back into the Church, *pari passu*, with frequent communion. Again thanks to Blessed Pius.

But we liturgists may be grateful, too, that our Patron is already secure in possession of essential beatitude. Else, how he would grieve over the crudity and vulgarity still rife in many places. If most of the "black list" has been happily expunged, how dourly gray is most of the "white list," not to mention the great bulk of music published by Catholic firms here and abroad. True, the cliché-ridden Caecilian school was some improvement over what it replaced, and the recent Italian manner may be less baleful than the style condemned by Pius X. But how far a cry, really, is it from Puccini to Yon, Bottiglieri and Montani (to mention only the departed)?

Thus, even after the *Motu Proprio*, the musician's lot is not altogether happy; his problems remain. But they are not his only, and I suggest that the *Motu Proprio* is not only *his* family legacy. It is almost as much

the artist's as the musician's, and Catholic artists, too, may thoughtfully commemorate its jubilee.

For one thing, Pius X did call to the Church's attention the long-overlooked truth that *art does matter*. After some three centuries of increasing secularism and a pestilential divorce between liturgy and art, the Blessed Pontiff authoritatively ordered that we keep not asunder what God had joined and meant to remain together. The Philistine heresy that art was either evil in itself, or at least irrelevant, has been exorcised from God's people. It may startle, or even pique, some shortsighted Catholics to see that the most apostolic of Christ's Vicars devote time and energy to something as unpragmatic as art. We, at least, are heartened.

Moreover, it is now forever clear that the Church does have a precise attitude on the rôle of art in sacred worship. It is no sophistry whatever, but a perfect *a pari* corollary, to apply the criteria of the *Motu Proprio* to other liturgical arts:

"Sacred music as an integral part of the solemn liturgy shares in its general purpose, which is the glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful. . . . Consequently, sacred music must possess, in the highest degree, the qualities proper to the liturgy, namely *holiness* and *goodness of form*, from which spontaneously there springs its other mark, *universality*. . . . It must be *true art*, for otherwise it is not possible for it to have that effect on listeners which the Church intends to achieve in admitting the art of music into her liturgy."

Thirdly, the *Motu Proprio* has been of enormous consequence in the history of sacred art by furnishing the Magna Carta for our liturgical movement. We may not call it the definitive Constitution; that would come later, as a sort of consequence, in another Pius's magisterial *Mediator Dei*. But it was an indispensable step and put a high blessing on what might have otherwise been only the peripheral activity of a

few intellectuals. Time and again, at least until the *Mediator Dei* made things even clearer, liturgists found papal support for their reforms in the *Motu Proprio*. Thanks to it and to them, we now take for granted the healthy liturgical climate of our mid-century. What this has done obliquely for Catholic art is too evident to bear comment.

Fourthly, it would seem that the *Motu Proprio* has also set down safe, if rather general, guiding norms in that delicate tension: traditional versus modern art. Quite unambiguously (as is the way of the saints), Blessed Pius states:

"The Church has always recognized and favored the progress of the arts, admitting to the service of worship everything good and beautiful that genius has been able to discover throughout the centuries — always however with due regard for liturgical laws. Consequently, modern music is also admitted in church."

He follows this with the sage caution, again applicable to so much of the visual art of recent centuries:

"Since modern [the Holy Father is describing the last century] music has risen principally for profane uses, greater care must be taken so that musical compositions in modern style which are admitted in church may contain nothing profane, nothing reminiscent of theatrical motifs. . . ."

What the Pontiff precisely means is further developed:

"Among the several kinds of modern music, what appears less suitable for accompanying the functions of worship is the theatrical style that was in greatest vogue during the last century [the 19th], especially in Italy. . . . Besides, the intrinsic structure, the rhythm and so called *conventionalism* of this style correspond badly to the requirements of true liturgical music."

I leave it to experts to determine just how this stricture should be applied to the visual arts. Does it not mean, by implication, also the "theatricalism" and

"conventionalism" of the art so well called "bondieuserie?" By way of parenthesis, here, I may be permitted to suggest what seems a felicitous English equivalent (which Father Stack, Adé de Bethune and I wracked our brains to find; this was proposed by one of my students and, I believe, does come close to what we want); the word is "googaudery" (with overtones of "goosey" and "gaudy" as well as "gewgaw" and the more literal "good-goddery!"). In any case, the Pope's ideas will certainly not prove palatable to "the old guard," who, in all arts, confuse "tradition" and "routine."

A final directive may, I submit, be drawn from Pius's insistence on Gregorian chant and the style of Palestrina. These are recommended, not in an antiquarian spirit, but rather because the norms for sacred music "are found, in the highest degree," in them. How totally the Pontiff's directives agree with the taste of our best musicians, could be pointed out by quotations from almost any music history. I shall give only the most recent, from Archibald T. Davison of Harvard, in his book *Church Music: Illusion and Reality*. Not a Catholic, Dr. Davison nevertheless calls our chant "the unchallenged example of worship become music." Later, speaking of Palestrina and other Catholic polyphonic composers, he states:

"It may appear to the reader, indeed, that this music of the Roman Catholic Church has been rather aggressively held up as a model. If this is so, it is only because

of a conscientious attempt to deal objectively with the matter; for that particular music, it would seem, fulfills two all-important requisites of true church music: first, in vying with the greatest music in any field, sacred, secular, or instrumental; and second, in creating an atmosphere of worship wherein not man but God appears as the important figure in the transaction."

In the light of other quotations from the *Motu Proprio* we realize, of course, that Palestrina and the chant are not intended to mean the exclusion of our best modern music. But the choice does clearly indicate that, to find the real tradition, Catholic artists and musicians often have to bypass the immediate past in favor of a more authentic epoch.

It is comforting today to note a distinct move toward, not neo- or pseudo-byzantinism or gothicism or Palestrinism, but toward the dynamic, basic principles that made the real styles (caricatured by them) so acceptable in God's worship. Pius X, one believes, now rejoices to know that, gradually replacing the conventional composers whose work he abhorred, we now have a Marier, a Peeters, and others; that aside from perpetrators of "googaudery" and replacing them, we have, at last, an Adé de Bethune and a Graham Carey. Rooted in the living tradition, working in the present moment, while learning from what was valid in the past, such artists (visual as well as musical) are doing the work envisioned by Blessed Pius, Patron of Sacred Art.

BOOK REVIEW

African Folktales and Sculpture

Folktales selected with an Introduction by Paul Radin; Sculpture selected with an Introduction by James Johnson Sweeney. New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1952. 355 pp., 165 plates, \$8.50.

African Folktales and Sculpture is a strikingly handsome book. Though its large size makes it somewhat difficult to

hold, and the pages of text are a little awkward for the eye which more easily follows the lines of a printed page nearer the normal size, the spaciousness is just right for showing to advantage the exceptionally fine photographs. The dust jacket designed by Kauffer catches and holds the eye with the splendid gilt head set against a dense terracotta background. It is a matter of

some surprise when one later discovers that this head is actually of terracotta and not of gilded stone.

The Preface provides a general background of geographic and cultural information. The Introduction by Paul Radin orients the reader toward an understanding of the oral literature of "the aboriginal inhabitants of Africa." He makes it clear that the Negroes possessed an oral literature of "artistic distinction," that indeed their folktales represent "a true art form, often possessing a high degree of sophistication and formalism."

Though this is undoubtedly so, these stories considered as stories are not on the whole satisfying to us, whereas the tales in Grimm's collection are generally pleasing in their order, anecdote, and conclusion. This probably is so, not because of an artistic superiority but simply because they conform to more familiar patterns of thought. As Radin points out, "in aboriginal societies as in our own, artists work with specific, traditional materials and in a limited number of styles." One comes to feel about their stories what the author of *Arabia Deserta* felt about some oral Oriental (Medina) tales: ". . . their fables appear to us barbarous and out of joint, and . . . cannot satisfy our conscience, inasmuch as they are irrational." If these are not actually irrational, many are seemingly so.

Naturally, of the tales reprinted here, all are not equal either in literary quality or in interest. Some tribes have a finer artistic gift than others; as to the stories in this collection, the Bushmen seem to have the superior literary art. In addition to the high quality of imagination apparent in their stories, there is in them a pleasing prose cadence discernible even in translation.

Not only do tribes differ in the quality of their art, but stories within the same tribe vary in artistic merit, a fact which points directly to the importance of the individual artist. Since the "author" of a folktale is unknown and the tendency has

been to ascribe its existence to a vague, ambiguous, evolutionary development, and since there has existed a real reluctance to admit the talent of an individual in place of a group myth-making psyche, it is highly interesting and encouraging to find Paul Radin speak out strongly for the individual: "All the evidence at our disposal today—and it is not inconsiderable—justifies our assuming that, from the very beginning of man's history, artistically gifted individuals have existed among all peoples." Also he takes care to point out that artists were and are recognized as such and highly regarded in "preliterate" communities and that in some instances an artist was "freed from many of his civic obligations so that he could have leisure to devote to his art."

If these African folktales are considered, not as stories, but as human and social documents they are seen to reveal in image, metaphor, moral attitude, general theme, in a simple turn of phrase, or in some trivial and homely detail, signs of the inner, common, universal life of human beings. Regardless of the unfamiliar patterns and, to us, frequently unsatisfying conclusions, we can then find in them a common ground of understanding and recognition. The fundamental concepts of love, justice, guilt, repentance, truth, bravery, beauty, jealousy, cruelty, vengeance, simplicity, shrewdness are all vividly present in these tales. One need only strip away the strange external husk to find the familiar kernel of meaning or value.

Probably the most impressive part of the book is the section on sculpture with its magnificent photographs. James Johnson Sweeney, in his introduction to this section on "African Negro Sculpture," warns us that African art must not be judged, as it sometimes has been, either solely from aesthetic standards or as merely "utilitarian" work "devoid of aesthetic feeling." It should not be separated from its culture and considered in isolation. "It seems," he says, "as dangerous as it is

absurd to separate an object from the thought that produced it and to look for emotions and seductions in material forms created by unknown hands, particularly when all the serious field research that has been done among the Africans shows that their art's 'aims, media, and products are primarily religious.' "

Sweeney, quoting William Fagg, also takes a stand on the importance of the individual as "a distinguishable and original personality," rather than as a unit functioning in the mass of the primitive community. It is well to keep in mind that there is a ground somewhere between rampant individualism and a too restrictive tradition wherein the virtues of a traditional heritage as well as the personal gifts of the individual may be validly and satisfyingly utilized. Fagg finds traditional influence supplying "the framework within which the artist must work and create." When there is a successful fusion of tradition with individual creativity, the result will be an art fuller, richer, in every way more satisfying than when there is an extreme of either one or the other.

"Religion with the Negro, as with all races, has been the main stimulus to artistic expression." Much of Negro art — fertility idols, fetishes, ritual masks — is specifically religious, but in addition a religious sense or attitude seems to pervade their work generally as might be expected in a world where the supernatural is everywhere acknowledged. The pervading sense of wonder and religious awe, lacking in much modern work, inevitably colors even their profane objects so that the Benin brass fish (Pl. 118) and the tiny gold weights of the Ashanti, full of wit and charm, (Pl. 106-8) seem to embody a recognition of the supernatural Hand responsible for all creation.

From the first illustration, a mask of wood from the Dogon tribe in the French Sudan, through 165 pages to the last terracotta head, we wander through a sculptured world of the imagination, strange and

sometimes dark, bewildering, or fearful, sometimes shining with serene light and tranquility, where we experience a deepening of consciousness, and are filled with amazement and admiration over the depths and riches of the gifts of the human personality. Though what we encounter is foreign and unfamiliar to us, it is in its depths related to our own imaginative penetrations and explorations of the fascinating mystery of the world in and around us. Likenesses enable us to meet in understanding and appreciation; differences provide richness and variety and open to us new perspectives and insights.

It is a feeble statement to say that there is amazing variety in the sculptured objects shown here. They are of superb craftsmanship; all are extraordinarily alive and of a sculpturally impressive simplification, stating themselves in strong structural planes. The eye is soon aware of differing effects produced by two types of surfaces, one dull or rough in finish, one highly polished. The dull surface seems to be drawing the external light into its invisible recesses and storing it as a force within itself. The polished surface reflects the light so that the planes shine with it and through it express a kind of joy. Both techniques are immensely successful. The mask in Plate 1 illustrates the rough, indrawing texture along vertical unpolished planes which receive rather than give light; in them are set long, rectangular eyeholes through which one looks, startled, into endless distances. Others are so highly polished that one might mistake them (in the photographs) for marble or metal. A Baluba mask (Pl. 22) has the luster of black marble; an oval mask from the Ivory Coast (Pl. 5) shines like brass or silver. The latter is a fine, pointed oval with nearly flat plane areas, symmetrical divisions, and wide, half-closed eyes, and the surface-shen which must shift with the mask's every movement is an integral part of its effectiveness.

A fine effect of hyperbole is frequently

obtained through sculptural distortion; this may be an accenting of the vertical lines, as in Pl. 48, a human figure in wood, or the horizontal, as in Pl. 51, an idol in wood with partial overlay of metal. These sculptures achieve that successful distortion or deformation which shocks the eye into alert attention, much as a bold metaphor or a paradox claims the attention of the mind. This effect of artistic hyperbole is obtained through color, especially through the dense white of kaolin (as in Pl. 19 and 20, masks from Gabon) where the large, simple, whitened surfaces are broken only by very small eye-slits and thin symmetrical eyebrow-like black lines. The effect is strong, strange, and awe-inspiring.

Because this Negro art has its root in reality and because it has been brought into existence through an intensity of vision, and forged from some strong inner idea or emotion, the resulting sculptural statements provide a means for the deepening of our own consciousness into new awarenesses and fruitful insights, and a subtler penetration of depths of reality beneath surface appearances. They, particularly the masks, are meant to be forces contending with the spirits of nature to extend man's control in the world, and to assure man's continued well-being; actually they show themselves as projections and evidences of human powers, and profound intuitions of the mysterious relation of the natural and the supernatural.

These attempts are invisible in the sculptures; a concentration of pent-up energy is strongly suggested in the bulging eye and elongated horn and exaggerated beak-like extension of some fabulous animal (Pl. 14), as well as in the shadowy,

mottled contours of a Warega mask which suggest unstable substance about to fade away or disintegrate, and in its tiny enigmatic eyes and minute round mouth through which one expects the issuance of some small, eerie, indeterminate sound. Some masks and other objects are clearly benign, some are malevolent; all, especially through the all-important eye-slits, evoke a sense of the mystery of existence.

Everywhere in this African art one is confronted with evidence of the universal human urge to create order out of raw, chaotic matter, whether in a design of faces on the sides of a drum, in a carved head on the handle of a beautifully shaped spoon, in the incised pattern on an ivory trumpet, or in the transformation of blank space on a door with human figures and abstract designs. The superb portrait heads of bronze, ivory, stone, and terracotta, show the outer imprint of an order within, expressing for the most part suavity, mildness, and serenity as dominant in the life-experience.

Through these examples of African art so splendidly photographed, as through all vital art, man seems to be showing forth his likeness to God, the Creator: man's working seems to be an image of God's working. Evident, too, in almost all these sculptured objects is the sign of a natural "caritas" directing their making, a lovingness which counts no cost in the accomplishment of the work. Without this a man's work would be cold; with it his work is alive and warm and communicative. Here again, by acting according to his nature, man imitates God who not only creates, but creates purely from love.

Dorothy Donnelly

The artist in our day has taken only the form of primitive art; he has recognized the wonderful sculptural feeling of the African Negro, but the sacral and symbolic content, insolubly connected with every work of primitive art, remained unimportant to him. We, however, must endeavor to grasp the mysterious unity between the visible appearance and the invisible religious or mythological meaning which is unique and which can never be revived; for it is the result of organic growth within a particular society and it defies repetition.

Heinrich Schwarz

REPORTS ON ART WORKSHOPS

The 1953 Workshop on the Art Program in Catholic Secondary Schools as well as the Workshop on Art in Catholic Elementary Schools was an encouraging indication of the desire and the need for this form of concentrated attention to the problems of Catholic art in our schools. Last year the entire group (interested in both elementary and secondary problems) numbered over sixty. This year, the combined groups numbered over eighty—and the enthusiasm of the participants has insured another workshop for 1954 at the Catholic University.

The morning sessions and two of the afternoon seminars of the Workshop on the Art Program in Catholic Secondary Schools, were held in Salve Regina Hall by special invitation of Miss Clare Fontanini, head of the art department of the Catholic University. The atmosphere and the convenience of the studios added greatly to the spirit of the workshop. Other seminars were accommodated in the architectural department—an arrangement which afforded ample space and equipment.

The papers given in the morning sessions proved to be not only guiding lights to the art teachers, but veritable meditations—storehouses of thought for the artist, the teacher, and the Christian artist-teacher. We have every reason to take a just pride in the spiritual and intellectual calibre of the Catholic Art Association as demonstrated by its members at this workshop.

The afternoon seminars were especially successful. By concentrating on one technique the participants acquired considerable skill and were amazed at their own progress. The splendid work displayed at the end of the ten days was proof of the success of this way of working. Not only skills were mastered, but methods of teaching them to high school students were discussed and evaluated.

The "in-between" talks, discussions and even arguments were an unscheduled but regular and healthy part of the workshop. Experiences were related, views, plans and ideas were freely exchanged, evaluated and often adjusted after the open discussion.

This freedom, common interest and sense of sureness in "finding the answers" is the characteristic of the workshop that makes it invaluable to all who participate.

*Sister Augusta, S.C.,
Workshop Director*

REPORT ON WORKSHOP ON ART IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The first Workshop on Art in Catholic Elementary Schools, conducted by members of the C.A.A. and held at Catholic University in June, was apparently a tremendous success. Registered for the workshop were representatives of fifteen states and Canada and twenty different religious communities, besides the lay people. Participants ranged from first grade teachers through eighth, directresses of normal schools, art instructors, diocesan supervisors, diocesan art supervisors and principals.

The workshop staff proved to be an excellent one. From the earliest speakers down to the last, the audience avidly followed a logical unfolding of truths pertinent to the gradual development of the child physically, emotionally, perceptually, intellectually, socially, creatively, aesthetically and spiritually. Each lecture was followed by a spirited discussion.

Afternoon seminars handled practical and individual problems. For this purpose three of the six seminars used regular classroom situations and demonstrations with children of the various grade levels. Successful and experienced teachers, these

seminar directors were: Sister Ann Christine, S.C., Sister M. Thomasita, O.S.F., and Sister M. Aquinata, O. P. Workshop participants themselves re-enforced theory, which they heard in the lectures and read from recommended books, with actual participation in a variety of techniques and projects.

*Sister M. Joanne, S.N.D.,
Workshop Director*

We are again grateful to the Catholic University through Doctor Deferrari, Director

of Workshops, for the invitation to continue our Workshops on art. We hope that more and more of our C.A.A. members will avail themselves of this opportunity to become better acquainted with the Catholic philosophy of art—and incidentally, with the Catholic Art Association.

The Proceedings of the 1952 Workshop on Art in the Catholic Secondary School can be procured from the Catholic University of America Press, Washington 17, D.C. The 1953 Proceedings will be available in the Spring.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

An officers' meeting of the Catholic Art Association was called to order on June 19, 1953, at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., on the occasion of the C.U.-C.A.A. Workshops on Art. There were twelve officers present.

It was moved and seconded that the office of Vice-President be held by a priest who could serve in the capacity of C.A.A. president in an emergency, with the right to succeed the president until the next national election of officers. It was further moved and seconded that the present vice-president's title be changed to National Convention Program Manager. Both motions were carried.

The president was voted the power to appoint the Convention Program Manager annually so that this officer would in every possible case be a resident in the convention area.

In a discussion of the 1954 CU.-C.A.A. Art Workshop, it was recommended that Sister Esther, S.P., serve as Director and that an assistant be appointed to help with the manifold duties involved.

Plans were then discussed for the 1953 C.A.A. National Convention which will be held on November 27-28 at Newton College of the Sacred Heart, Newton, Mass. Mother Louise Keyes, R.S.C.J., recently transferred from the New England Region, will be succeeded by Mother

Elizabeth White, R.S.C.J., as hostess to the convention. The tentative convention program appears elsewhere in this issue.

Recommendations were made to fill the following offices: vice-president, regional director of the Mountain Region, the New England Region, and the North Central Region.

There was a discussion of promotion and publicity for the C.A.A., and a committee was appointed to formulate the privileges and responsibilities of each C.A.A. officer for purposes of record.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rev. David Ross King,
President*

The following letter was sent to the C.A.A. president to acknowledge the work that has been done on the art course of study for the elementary school, and to organize a committee to complete the work begun:

June 12, 1953

Rev. David Ross King
Workshop on Secondary Art
Catholic University of America
Washington, D. C.

Dear Father King:

It has been suggested that the best method for facilitating the completion of the Elementary Art Course would be to have a few members of the committee

meet in Newport, Rhode Island, during the month of August.

The following members have been contacted and are willing to serve: Sister M. Jeanne, O.S.F., Sister M. Joanne, S.N.D., Sister Esther, S.P., Miss Adé de Béthune and Miss Joyce Fink.

From long and varied experience in the construction of Courses of Study, I know that the final manuscript must be the work of a few individuals in a concentrated period. Therefore, I not only heartily approve of this plan but, in the name of the Curriculum Committee of the New York State Council of Catholic School Superintendents, suggest its endorsement by the Catholic Art Association.

If the approval of the Association is forthcoming, will you officially ask the

above named members to attend and participate in this final session in Newport?

The project has progressed satisfactorily. I am convinced that it is being done most thoroughly with great attention to detail. The Association brought to it the most outstanding and competent elementary school art educators who worked untiringly and enthusiastically. I have every confidence that the Course, when completed, will be a significant contribution to Catholic education on an elementary level.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you, the Catholic Art Association, and all the members who participated in any way.

Gratefully yours,

Vy. Rev. Msgr. Sylvester J. Holbel,
Superintendent of Schools,
Diocese of Buffalo

NEWS & COMMENT

FATHER KING, whose Workshop paper is reprinted in this issue, brings to his work the benefits of association with the late Dom Virgil Michel, O.S.B., Dom Godfrey Diekmann and Jacques Maritain. Father King spent several years in graduate studies at Toronto University, Laval University, and at the abbey of St.-Benoit-du-Lac. He did extensive research at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in the history of Christian worship. At present he is pastor of the Church of the Holy Assumption, Superior, Wisconsin, and is also Superintendent of Schools.

FATHER McNASPY, S.J., Mus. Doc., who writes on the *Motu Proprio*, is a faculty member of the Gregorian Institute and Associate Editor of *Caecilia*. His recent translation and commentary of the *Motu-Proprio* is published by the Gregorian Institute.

GEORGE J. McMORROW, Ph. D., is a graduate of Boston College and the University of Notre Dame. He is on the faculty of the Philosophy Department at Nazareth College and lectures extensively on liturgical arts, music, science and philosophy.

FATHER WALCH wishes a correction to be made in his president's report for 1952. He writes: "It was erroneously stated that two regional meetings were held in the Central Region, one in Chicago and one in Detroit. This should have read: 'three regional meetings were conducted by Sister Ruth, S.S.J., director, at Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Sister Mary Leo, S.S.N.D., hostess); at Marywood Academy, Grand Rapids, Michigan (Sister Servatia, O.P., hostess); and at Loretto Academy, Chicago, Illinois (Sister Alphonsus, I.B.V.M., hostess).'"

SISTER RUTH, S.S.J., reports a successful sixteenth central regional meeting on May 9, 1953, at Alleman High School, Rock Island, Illinois. The meeting was highlighted by a talk, "Sentimentality in Christian Art," given by Father Catich and illustrated with colored slides.

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS, 1952, are now available from The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 17, D.C., in either paper or cloth-bound copies. The 1953 *Proceedings* will be available in the Spring of 1954.

1953 CONVENTION PROGRAM

ART AND ALL NATIONS

The National Convention of the C.A.A. will be held November 27th and 28th at Newton College of the Sacred Heart, 885 Center Street, Newton 59, Mass. Complete details and exhibition blanks will be supplied in the President's pre-convention letter to members. The tentative program follows:

NOV. 26, THURSDAY

- 2:00 P.M. Officers' Meeting
- 7:00 P.M. Education Committee Meeting

NOV. 27, FRIDAY

- 8:00 A.M. Registration
- 8:30 A.M. High Mass. Homily, *The Reverend William J. Leonard, S.J.*, Boston College
- 9:30 A.M. Registration continued
- 10:00 A.M. Address of Welcome, *Mother Eleanor S. Kenny, R.S.C.J.*, President, Newton College of the Sacred Heart
"One World: God's Work and Man's," *The Reverend David Ross King*, President of the Catholic Art Association.
"Lo, the Poor Indian, Whose Untutored Mind . . .", *Graham Carey*, Fair Haven, Vermont
- 12:00 Noon Luncheon
- 1:30 P.M. Demonstrations and discussions: Calligraphy, Water Color, Home Crafts, Rosary Making, School arts, Stained Glass, Wood Sculpture, Jewelry Making, Graphic Arts
- 3:00 P.M. Program of Lithuanian Dances
- 3:30 P.M. "Art as the Measure of the Social Order," *Carl W. Merschel*, Chicago, Illinois
- 4:30 P.M. Guided tours of the Exhibitions
- 5:30 P.M. Compline and Benediction
- 6:00 P.M. Dinner
- 7:30 P.M. Films

NOV. 28, SATURDAY

- 8:00 A.M. High Mass
- 9:30 A.M. "The Good, the True, and the Beautiful," *The Right Reverend John J. Wright, D.D.*, Bishop of Worcester, Mass.
"Developing the Child's Personal Integrity through Art," *Roma Gans*, Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York
Negro Spirituals illustrated by *Alan Crite* and sung by the Newton College Double Quartette
- 12:00 Noon Luncheon. Reports by C.A.A. officers
- 1:30 P.M. "Art and Christian Social Living" *Sister M. Jeanne, O.S.F.*, Rosary Hill College, Buffalo, N. Y.
"Art Without a Country," *George J. McMorrow*, Nazareth College, Nazareth, Michigan
- 3:30 P.M. Group Meetings:
 - 1) Seminary and Novitiate: *The Reverend Francis X. Charnotta, M.S.C.*
 - 2) Professional: *Adé de Béthune*
 - 3) College: *Ann H. Grill*
 - 4) High School: *Sister Augusta, S.C.*
 - 5) Elementary School: C.A.A. Elementary Committee
 - 6) Home and Parish: *Mrs. Nelson Mercer*
- 5:30 P.M. Blessing of the Advent Wreath, Compline and Benediction
- 6:00 P.M. Dinner
- 7:00 P.M. Final Officers' Meeting

C. A. A. TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS

The following Traveling Exhibitions and Slide Lectures are available to members of the Catholic Art Association. Rental fees cover assembling, packing and insurance. The exhibitor pays for transportation by railway express collect only for shipment from previous borrower to himself. Requests for booking are honored in order of their receipt, but, whenever possible, borrowers should indicate alternate dates so that transportation costs may be held to a minimum. A 10% reduction in the fee will be made for bookings scheduled six months or more in advance. Address inquiries to your regional representatives: Atlantic Region—Mrs. W. J. Paul, 233 South Buckingham Place, Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania; East Central, Central and North Central Regions—Sister Carlotta, S.N.D., 1601 Dixie Highway, Covington, Kentucky. Requests from other regions should be addressed to the Exhibition Chairman: Mr. Julius Vander Linde, 240 West Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Borrowing time: three weeks

Fees for each of the following exhibitions are: members, \$5.00; non-members, \$7.00, with the exception of the General Exhibition, members, \$20.00; non-members, \$25.00, and the Art in the Christian Home Exhibition, members, \$15.00; non-members, \$20.00.

1—A R B O TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Twenty-three mats 15x20 and 10x15. Over seventy images and symbols with calligraphy, covering mostly the feasts of the Church year and the sacraments: from Klosterneuberg near Vienna. The illustrations for Father Pius Parsch's *The Year of Grace*.

2—CLADEK TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Eight mats 15x20. Over forty examples of William V. Cladek's calligraphy as used for Christmas and Easter cards, announcements, etc.

3—GENERAL TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Available only in the West and the South in the present season. Catalogue and description sent upon request. Fee: members, \$20.00; non-members, \$25.00.

4—HAGREEN TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Fifty-three mats 10x15 and 10x10 in two series: A—religious wood cuts and engravings; B—cartoons cut in wood for "The Cross and Plough," organ of the Catholic Land Movement of England.

5—PAULSON STAINED GLASS EXHIBITION

Fourteen stained glass medallions averaging about 4 inches in diameter, all mounted on 9x11 plywood mounts ready to be displayed by hanging in the windows. The work of Carl Paulson of Upton, Massachusetts. Subjects: the lives of the saints.

6—RIEDEL TRAVELING EXHIBITION

New work from post-war Germany. Classical calligraphy by Alfred Riedel. Texts are in German.

7—DERRICK TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Twenty-nine mats 22x28 and 22x14. Over eighty brush drawings by the English artist, Thomas Derrick.

8—SCHMIDT TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Forty-three mats 15x20 and 10x15. A representative collection of the work of Clement Schmidt, a contemporary German artist of Weisbaden-in-Hesse. Vestment and altar furniture designs, Christmas and various festal cards, calligraphy, sketches for murals, and photographs of a set of stations for a small church.

9—ART IN THE CHRISTIAN HOME EXHIBITION

Nine 31x48 panels of mounted artifacts with additional smaller mounts, as well as numerous unmounted artifacts: Holy water fonts, pictures, crucifixes, sculpture, medals, linens, etc.

10—ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Drawings, paintings and craft work of elementary school pupils from over thirty different schools.

Fee: 25c a day and express charges one way.

11—CATCH ROSARY-MAKING EXHIBITION

One glass enclosed case, 20 x 26 x 4, showing materials, tools and processes in fashioning rosaries.

12—MERSCHER PRINT EXHIBITION

Seventy matted linoleum block prints by the Chicago artist, Carl W. Merschel. Fifty-six mats 15x20 and 14 mats 10x15.

SLIDE LECTURE SERVICE

Borrowing time: two weeks

A completely written out lecture accompanies the slides. The lecture material is gauged to cover approximately one hour's time. Fee: members, \$5.00; non-members, \$7.00.

1—A MODERN TRADITIONAL CHURCH. Thirty 2 x 2 color slides on the church of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota. Architecture and furnishings.

2—ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS. Twenty-nine slides, 4 x 3 1/4, with an accompanying lecture.

PICTURE BOOKS

Catholic Art Association Picture Books may be borrowed by members and kept three weeks. There is no charge for borrowing them. Address all requests for Picture Books to Mrs. W. J. Paul, 233 South Buckingham Place, Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania.

BOOK ONE contains holy pictures published by *Ars Sacra* (including the work of Hummel, Reinhalter, Bachlechner, Maedler, Baecklin, etc.).

BOOK TWO contains holy pictures published by *Katholische Kunstwerte* of Dusseldorf and *Ars Pia* of Karlsruhe (including the work of Wendling, Odo, Schmidt, etc.).

BOOK THREE contains greeting cards for Christmas, Easter, various feast days and special occasions, book-marks, etc. by Sister Mary of the Compassion and others.

BOOK FOUR contains greeting cards for various seasons of the liturgical year by A. de Bethune and others.

